

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended). A protective cover for protection of agricultural products, said protective cover sized to permit said cover to be positioned generally about an associated agricultural product, said cover being formed from a single ply ~~consisting~~ of a nonwoven fabric ~~formed from~~ consisting of spunbond, thermoplastic polymeric filamentary elements, ~~said fibrous nonwoven fabric~~ having a basis weight from about 10 to about 100²gr/m² and including a portion exhibiting the ability to modify the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting, while retarding passage of dust and insects, said portion being formed by printing on said nonwoven fabric to occlude light transmission therethrough.

Claim 2 (canceled).

Claim 3 (canceled).

Claim 4 (canceled).

Claim 5 (canceled).

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (canceled).

Claim 8 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 6, wherein:

said cover comprises at least one means for affixing the protective cover about an agricultural product.

Claim 9 (original). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said cover comprises at least one piece of said fibrous nonwoven fabric, with at least one seam joining edge portions of said piece of fabric, said seam being formed by at least one of heat-bonding, adhesive bonding, and sewing.

Claim 10 (canceled).

Claim 11 (canceled).

Claim 12 (previously presented). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

spunbond thermoplastic polymeric filamentary elements incorporate one or more protection-enhancing agents selected from the group consisting of insecticidal, fungicidal, algaecidal, decay-inhibiting, volatile ripening chemistry absorbent, UV-protective, and pigmenting agents.

Claim 13 (previously presented). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 12, wherein

said polymeric material is a thermoplastic polymer, and said protection enhancing agent is a melt-additive in said polymer.

Claim 14 (currently amended). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 12, wherein:

said protection enhancing agent comprises a fiber surface treatment for said ~~fibrous nonwoven fabric~~ polymeric filamentary elements.

Claim 15 (currently amended). A protective cover for agricultural products in accordance with claim 12, wherein:

said protection enhancing agent comprises a topical treatment applied to said ~~nonwoven fabric~~ polymeric filamentary elements.

Claim 16 (currently amended). A protective cover for protection of agricultural products, said protective cover having a tubular configuration sized to permit said cover to be positioned generally about an associated agricultural product, said cover being formed from a single-ply consisting of a nonwoven fabric ~~formed from~~ consisting of spunbond polymeric filamentary elements formed from material selected from the group consisting of thermoplastic polymers and printing thereon, said nonwoven fabric exhibiting the ability to modify the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting while retarding passage of dust and insects, said modification of the ripening of the agricultural product occurring by alteration of the light transmittance by said printing on at least one region of the protective cover to occlude light transmission therethrough.

Claim 17 (canceled).

Claim 18 (previously presented). A method of protecting agricultural products, comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric consisting of spunbond
filamentary elements formed from material selected from the group consisting of
thermoplastic polymers;

forming a sheet from said nonwoven fabric having a finite length and width;
modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered
level of light transmittance by printing on said nonwoven fabric to occlude light
transmission therethrough; and

positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to alter
the ripening of the agricultural product prior to harvesting and protecting the product
from dust and/or insects.

Claim 19 (canceled).

Claim 20 (canceled).

Claim 21 (canceled).

Claim 22 (canceled).

Claim 23 (previously presented) A method of protecting agricultural products,
comprising the steps of:

providing at least one piece of nonwoven fabric consisting of spunbond
filamentary elements formed from material selected from the group consisting of
thermoplastic polymers;

modifying at least one region of the nonwoven fabric so as to have an altered level of light transmittance by printing on said nonwoven to occlude light transmission therethrough;

forming a tube from said nonwoven fabric by joining together of edge portions thereof;

cutting said tube to a selected length to form a protective cover; and
positioning said protective cover generally about an agricultural product to protect the product from dust and/or insects.

Claim 24 (currently amended). A method of protecting agricultural products in accordance with claim 14, wherein:

said ~~tube-forming~~ step of forming a tube includes joining edge portions of said piece of nonwoven fabric by at least one of heat bonding, adhesive bonding, and sewing.

Claim 25 (canceled).

Claim 26 (canceled).